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DNR plans 5 deer rule open house meetings

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources has scheduled five open house meetings to share information about proposed changes to deer hunting regulations.

A rules package put forth by the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife received preliminary approval from the Natural Resources Commission in July. The rules package is open to public comment and will be the subject of official public hearings sometime in early 2011.

“We think it’s important in the meantime to inform deer hunters and the public about the reasons behind the proposals,” said Mark Reiter, director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. “With the feedback we’ve received so far, it’s clear there is some misunderstanding about the goals of our management strategy and how the various pieces fit into our plan.”

Dates, times and locations for the open houses are:

- Aug. 16, 2-6 p.m. at Pike Township Public Library, 6525 Zionsville Road, Indianapolis
- Aug. 18, 2-7 p.m. at Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Area, 4320 W. Toto Road, North Judson
- Aug. 18, 2-7 p.m. at Jennings County Public Library, 2375 N. SR 3, North Vernon
- Aug. 19, 2-7 p.m. at DNR Northeast Region Office, 1353 S. Governors Dr., Columbia City
- Aug. 19, 2-7 p.m. at Sugar Ridge Fish & Wildlife Area, 2310 E SR 364, Winslow

Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists will be present to provide information in an informal discussion format. Attendees are encouraged to ask questions and learn more about the proposed changes.

Attendees also will be able to submit written comments, which will be delivered to the DNR Division of Hearings and the NRC.

The proposed changes include reconfiguring the traditional 16-day firearms and muzzleloader seasons to nine days each while adding new antlerless-only “seasons” – two days in October in designated counties, and eight days in late December statewide.

Another change would extend urban deer zone hunting through Jan. 31. Under current rules, the urban zone season ends the first Sunday in January. Other changes would allow hunters age 64 and older to use crossbows in the early archery season, allow hunters of any age to use crossbows in the firearms, muzzleloader and urban deer zone seasons, and create a new nonresident youth deer license.